



Dana E. Blackwell  
Executive Director

## LOS ANGELES COUNTY COMMISSION FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

**COMMISSIONERS:**  
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DR. LA-DORIS MCCLANEY  
SANDRA RUDNICK  
ADELINA SORKIN, LCSW  
REVEREND G. LIND TAYLOR  
DR. HARRIETTE WILLIAMS, CHAIR

### APPROVED MINUTES

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The General Meeting of the Commission for Children and Families was held on Monday, **November 17, 2003**, in room 739 of the Kenneth Hahn Hall of Administration, 500 West Temple Street, Los Angeles. **Please note that these minutes are intended as a summary and not as a verbatim transcription of events at this meeting.**

#### COMMISSIONERS PRESENT

Carol O. Biondi  
Patricia Curry  
Hon. Joyce Fahey  
Brenda Galloway  
Phalen G. Hurewitz  
Helen Kleinberg  
Daisy Ma  
Christina S. Mattingly  
Dr. La-Doris McClaney  
Sandra Rudnick  
Adelina Sorkin  
Rev. G. Lind Taylor  
Dr. Harriette Williams

Trinity Wallace-Ellis, Youth Representative

#### COMMISSIONERS ABSENT (Excused)

Lily Griego

#### APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA

Chair Williams requested an amendment to the order of the agenda items on the November 17, 2003 meeting. The agenda was approved as amended.

## **APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

The minutes for October 27, 2003 retreat meeting were unanimously approved. The minutes for the November 3, 2003 minutes were held for approval.

## **OLD BUSINESS**

Children Now/Scorecard Recommendations: Susan Kim, Children's Planning Council (CPC), gave a brief description of the board motion ordering the CPC to develop recommendations focused on improving the circumstances for children in Los Angeles County. There are three general areas upon which recommendations have been drafted: 1) increasing access to health insurance; 2) increasing the number of families who file for the Earned Income Tax Credit and 3) increasing the number of children in safe, stable and nurturing families.

In the area of increasing the number of children in safe, stable and nurturing homes, Ms. Kim described the process by which the recommendations were developed and the efforts of stakeholders in two separate work group meetings to achieve consensus on these recommendations. Additionally, there is an overarching goal, which lays the foundation for the three recommendations in this area. The recommendations focus on prevention, family reunification, and legal permanency and were developed at the suggestion of Dr. Sanders, DCFS. Each of the recommendations involves a large number of stakeholders with the Department as the lead agency.

The CPC will review and ratify the recommendations at their meeting on November 19, 2003. The Board of Supervisors' (BOS) Deputies will be briefed in December and a presentation to the BOS on will take place on January 13, 2004. The CPC will recommend that the BOS approve all of the recommendations and the CPC will provide progress reports to the BOS over the 18-month implementation of the recommendations. She indicated that the central participants to carry out the action would be responsible for moving the work forward. She added that the recommendations are building on work that is currently underway.

Chair Williams reminded the Commission that the focus of our work for the upcoming year would concentrate on these three areas by co-convening workgroups with the Department.

Chair Sorkin asked who would provide the funding to ensure that the work is carried out. Ms. Kim stated that no funds have been allocated toward these recommendations and that the issue of funding was never discussed. She suggested that the CPC would engage in a funding discussion if the need arises.

Commissioner Kleinberg expressed concern that Recommendation 2 called for an implementation plan within 60 days and asked for a rationale for that timeframe. Ms. Kim indicated that the work on family reunification is underway and the plan would build on this effort. Commissioner Kleinberg referenced Dr. Barbara Solomon's report on Family Preservation and stated that there needs to be an examination of what family reunification efforts are effective. She does not believe that an implementation plan can

be developed within the 60-day timeframe. Commissioner Curry indicated that the New Directions Task Force has begun working in this area and has developed the Integrated Family Services System (IFSS) design that includes family reunification.

Commissioner Curry suggested that over the years the Commission has been involved in many committees, task forces, etc that have made recommendations aimed at improving many aspects of the County's child welfare system and that it is important to build on the work that has been done and begin implementing policies to improve the current system.

Dr. Sanders indicated that his intention was for the Department and the Commission to co-convene workgroups focused on the three areas. He stated that the IFSS includes a plan, which can be built upon for family reunification; however, he commented that the development of this plan did not include input from stakeholders. His intention is that a structure be created that parallels previous Commission discussions to oversee these three areas and then identify how to move forward. With respect to the timelines laid out in the recommendations, Dr. Sanders believes that there is a sense of urgency to ensure that implementation takes place as quickly as possible.

Vice Chair Biondi commented that she is unsure of what family reunification efforts are made for probation youth, although the probation camps provide family conferencing to assist in the transition.

Commissioner Fahey asked if the Department has information as to how other jurisdictions are effectively providing family reunification services. Vice Chair Biondi asserted that she believes Illinois, Kentucky, and New York have successful family reunification services.

Commissioner Kleinberg urged that consumers be involved in the process of determining what elements would be included in an effective family reunification policy.

## **NEW BUSINESS**

Compton Project: Eric Marts, DCFS, indicated that the Compton Project includes five components: 1) the opening of an office in Compton; 2) identification of subsequent sites in SPA 6; 3) co-location of CSWs in schools and community based organizations (the first co-located site will be at Compton High School); 4) the inclusion of faith based organizations and community leaders in the planning process to improve services in SPA 6; 5) the implementation of a service delivery system aimed at decreasing the number of children entering the dependency system.

Mr. Marts reviewed the geographic scan that the Project would include as well as the surrounding schools that would also be considered for co-location of staff.

In response to the PriceWaterHouseCoopers Audit's characterization of the Department's service delivery system, the Point of Engagement delivery system was designed. Mr. Marts stated that the essential component of the Point of Engagement design is the utilization of Structured Decision Making (SDM). Through the use of this assessment

tool, CSWs will be able to make consistent decisions with respect to the level of risk and safety present within the home at the time an investigation takes place. Once the assessment is made, the Point of Engagement design includes a decision tree to guide the CSW to determine the level of intervention necessary and/or the appropriate referral source to support the families needs based on their level of risk. The decision tree allows the Department the ability to provide an "alternative response" system to allow children to remain safely in their homes while families are receiving supportive services. Mr. Marts indicated that the First 5 Commission has adopted the alternative response approach and will be issuing a Request For Proposal (RFP) at the beginning of 2004 for community-based organizations (CBO) to provide the needed supportive services. Additionally, the Department will issue an RFP for the Safe and Stable Families/Family Preservation funds. The intent of the funding is to develop a service continuum to support the Point of Engagement service delivery system. The expectation of the service provider is to respond to the Emergency Response workers request for services at the time the request is made for high-risk families and within two days for lesser risk families.

Mr. Marts indicated that the service challenge is accessing substance abuse, mental health, and domestic violence services, as the Department has historically not "mapped" these resources in SPA 6. As many of the families in SPA 6 are CalWORKS eligible, these services can be accessed through this program. Additionally, the Compton Project has identified and developed partnerships with the community agencies that provide services in these areas.

Mr. Marts indicated that the Waterridge site will be the first office to pilot the Compton Project beginning in December and the participating CSWs will have lowered caseloads. He presented the proposed training curriculum for staff and indicated that it has been approved and adopted by the University Consortium.

Mr. Marts indicated that the Department and the Department of Mental Health issued a Request for Information (RFI) to identify agencies to conduct multi-disciplinary, assessments (MAT) for all youth detained by the Department. The assessment will include caregivers and will attempt to identify issues with respect to family reunification, appropriate placements, and permanency. The MAT will begin as a pilot project and cover the Pasadena and Waterridge offices/areas. Funding will be provided through EPSDT.

Vice Chair Biondi acknowledged the lack of resources in SPA 6. She asked if the capacity of the CBOs has been identified and whether a list of the Mental Health providers has been developed. Mr. Marts will provide a list of the Mental Health providers. He stated that with respect to substance abuse, funding is limited. EPSDT funds will ensure the provision of mental health services.

In response to Commissioner Rudnick, Mr. Marts explained that outcomes for the project will be established and an evaluation will take place prior to the project expanding to other SPAs.

Trinity Wallace-Ellis suggested that youth who have been involved in the dependency system should participate in the training to CSWs so they may better understand the children and families' perspective. Commissioner McClaney suggested that the training also include cultural competency.

Commissioner Kleinberg asked Mr. Marts to clarify the structure of the CSWs caseload. Mr. Marts stated that caseloads have been lowered by 20% and are geographically based.

Commissioner Curry questioned the omission of Family Group Decision Making (FGDM) and stressed the importance of the inclusion of families in developing the case plan. Mr. Marts stated that FGDM is included in the Point of Engagement design and training on this tool has taken place at the Waterridge office. Commissioner Curry again stressed the importance of FGDM in the continuum of care. She suggested that other county agencies be included to address the entire needs of the family, such as housing, employment, etc.

Commissioner Sorkin acknowledged and thanked the Department for beginning this project in SPA 6, as the Commission has consistently had concern with respect to service delivery and resources in this geographic area.

Chair Williams suggested that if Commissioners had further questions, to put them in writing and submit to the Commission office. She suggested that Mr. Marts return for further updates when the Commission addresses the area of prevention.

## **DIRECTOR'S REPORT**

- Dr. Sanders announced that Gene Gilden will temporarily replace Michael Olenick as Division Chief of Emancipation. He is hoping to bring in a permanent replacement relatively soon.
- Dr. Sanders indicated that the Department's efforts toward SPA realignment should be completed in a very short period of time. The effort is taking place in conjunction with staff redeployment.
- Dr. Sanders has identified the Service Deputies to co-convene workgroups in the areas of family reunification, prevention, and permanency with the Commission. He indicated that the Department is ready to move forward once the Commission has determined the structure by which this work will take place.
- A meeting took place with the Department and the group home providers to discuss their contract. Dr. Sanders stated that group home contract comes up for renewal in April 2004. With respect to contract deliverables five areas were identified by the Department to be strengthened: 1) improving the referral process to group homes; 2) discontinuing the premature discharge of youth from the group homes; 3) the group homes role in assisting children reunify with families or other permanency options; 4) while youth are in a group home setting there should be an improvement in educational outcomes; 5) the abuse rate will diminish for youth in group homes. Dr.

Sanders added that the intent of the contract will be to tie the achievement of these outcomes to the viability of the contract with individual providers.

Finally, Dr. Sanders stated that the contract process will be developed to support the goals of the contract. A Request for Statement of Qualifications will be issued to examine individual providers ability to address the identified outcome areas. It will also allow the Department to determine whether they have contracted with the appropriate number of providers to meet the needs of the population, as well as bring in new providers as needed.

Commissioner Curry suggested that the Department examine that there are enough providers in the areas in which there is the greatest need.

Commissioner McClaney encouraged close monitoring of the CSWs to ensure that placement is made based on the child's needs and not on convenience or favoritism.

Commissioner Hurewitz suggested that the contract should include a provision for group homes to access additional support services to support the youth and prevent placement disruption.

Commissioner Fahey suggested that there be a reevaluation and emphasis on mental health services. Commissioner Kleinberg added that providers should be separate from the group home structure.

Trinity Wallace-Ellis suggested that there needs to be attention paid to substance abuse problems with the youth residing in group homes. Commissioner McClaney added that there should be closer monitoring of the prescription of psychotropic medication.

Commissioner Curry made suggestions with respect to the specificity of program statements as previously recommended by the placement taskforce. Ms. Wallace-Ellis suggested that changes be made to the group home orientation provided by the Department.

Dr. Sanders offered the Commission the invitation to participate on the development of this contract and that Walter Chan and Ed Sosa can provide the Commission with a more detailed presentation on the elements of the contract.

#### **PUBLIC COMMENT**

There was no request for public comment.

#### **CHAIR'S REPORT**

- Chair Williams requested that all Commissioners read the by-laws.
- Commissioners were asked to think about whether they would like to take their notebooks home.

- Chair Williams announced that the Board of Supervisors approved the Department's pursuit of the Title IV-E Waiver
- Chair Williams announced her participation at the November 7 CPC workgroup. She thanked Commissioners Curry, Biondi and Sorkin and the Executive Director for their participation as well.
- Chair Williams acknowledge the work of Grandma's Angels for providing their third annual retreat for relative providers, which took place November 15. She thanked Commissioner Sorkin for her attendance.
- Chair Williams announced the California Juvenile Court's Centennial Conference. Commissioners should contact the office if they would like to attend. Vice Chair Biondi indicated that she will be in attendance.
- Chair Williams announced that the CAO is working on a draft RFP for the internet passport. She encouraged those who have worked towards its creation to report back to the Commission after having reviewed the document if they feel it is important.
- Chair Williams presented Dr. Michael Olenick with a Certificate of Appreciation for his work on Emancipation while serving as the program's Division Chief.

Finally, Chair Williams summarized the work that took place during the Commission's retreat and the focus on family reunification, permanency, and prevention. She passed out committee assignments, which include Commissioner participation in each of these work groups, Commission committees, and community representation. Chairs were assigned to each of the workgroups. Chair Williams also announced the assignment of the Deputy Directors to the workgroups. The assignments are as follows: Family Reunification: Russ Carr; Prevention: Dr. Sophy and Jackie Acosta; Permanency: Trish Ploehn and Paul Freedlund. Angela Carter will participate in all of the workgroups. Commissioner Sorkin commented that the Commission does not have representation on the FGDM workgroup. The Commission office will provide times for this meeting so Commissioners can determine if they can attend the meeting. With respect to the Katie A. settlement, Chair Williams asked Commissioner Curry and Commissioner Biondi to speak with Dr. Sanders after the meeting.

Chair Williams provided the Commission with a calendar that indicates when the workgroups would be the centerpiece of the Commission meetings. She encouraged the workgroups to be creative about how they use their time on the agenda.

### **MEETING ADJOURNED**

Chair Williams adjourned the meeting and requested that workgroup members meet briefly.